

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 044056

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, PLOS, PFOR, CH, TW, KS, US

SUBJECT: GULF PLANS TO DRILL IN EAST CHINA SEA

REF: STATE 038185

1. IN FEB 25 CONVERSATION INITIATED BY E. DAVID PHILLEY, VICE PRESIDENT OF ZAPATA EXPLORATION COMPANY, DEPUTY SECRETARY INGERSOLL EXPRESSED, AS HE HAD TO GULF OIL, DEPT'S CONCERN REGARDING GULF/ZAPATA PLANS TO DRILL FOR OIL IN SOUTHWESTERN CORNER OF THE DISPUTED SOUTHERN ROK CONCESSION AREA. PHILLEY SAID ZAPATA WILLING DELAY DRILLING IF GULF AND ROKG CONCURRED IN VIEW PRO-

FESSED LACK OF ENTHUSIASM OF BOTH GULF AND ZAPATA FOR PLANNED DRILLING, DELAY MAY IN EFFECT AMOUNT TO CANCELLA-

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TION OF DRILLING.

2. EMBASSY THEREFORE SHOULD NOW INFORM ROKG OF OUR CONCERN OVER DRILLING IN DISPUTED AREA AND THAT DEPT HAS ADVISED GULF/ZAPATA THAT WE DO NOT BELIEVE THEY SHOULD UNDERTAKE SUCH DRILLING. EMBASSY SHOULD MAKE FOLLOWING POINTS TO ROKG:

A. GULF OIL HAS RECENTLY TOLD US OF PLAN TO DRILL EXPLORATORY WELLS AT APPROXIMATELY 125 DEGREES 45 MIN EAST, 31 DEGREES 5 MINUTES NORTH. THIS IS IN A DISPUTED AREA CLAIMED BOTH BY ROKG AND THE PRC.

B. WE REALIZE THAT THE ROKG'S OFFER TO OPEN TALKS WITH PRC ON DISPUTED AREAS HAS GONE UNANSWERED. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THAT THERE REMAINS A PROSPECT THAT A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF THIS ISSUE COULD BE REACHED EVENTUALLY IN THE CONTEXT OF IMPROVED OVERALL ROK-PRC RELATIONS. WE BELIEVE THE PRC'S ATTITUDE TOWARD DRILLING IN DISPUTED AREAS HAS RECENTLY HARDENED. WE HAVE NOTED THE PRC'S FORMAL WARNINGS IN FEBRUARY AND APRIL 1974 THAT QUOTE ANYONE WHO ARBITRARILY UNDERTAKES DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN THIS AREA MUST TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL THE CONSEQUENCES ARISING THEREFROM. UNQUOTE. A CONTENTIOUS INCIDENT ARISING FROM THE PROPOSED DRILLING ACTIVITY COULD CAUSE SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR BOTH OUR COUNTRIES.

C. USG HAS LONG ADVISED U.S. OIL COMPANIES NOT TO WORK IN DISPUTED ASIAN WATERS, CITING THE SPECIAL RISKS INVOLVED AND THAT THEY COULD NOT EXPECT U.S. PROTECTION FOR THEIR OPERATIONS.

D. ACCORDINGLY, WE HAVE ADVISED BOTH GULF AND ZAPATA NOT TO CARRY OUT THEIR DRILLING PLANS.

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